

Story 2127 (1966 Tape 1

Narrator: Mine Sümer at time of narration but subsequently reverted to maiden name (Erol) after divorce.

Location: İstanbul, capital of İstanbul Province

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Fisherman Prince Marries Poor Girl

Once there was and once there was not,¹ time within time,² when the sieve was in the straw,³ there was a prince. This son of the ruler liked to mingle with the very

¹Formulaic opening for many Turkish folktales, this is known as a tekerleme. A full tekerleme may run to many lines, though most narrators nowadays use only one or two parts of a tekerleme. The tekerleme is a nonsense jingle filled with paradoxes and other comic incongruities. It is meant both to amuse and to alert the audience to the fact that a tale is to follow. Some of the humor is lost in translation because it is difficult to reproduce in English the rhyme scheme.

²"Time within Time" refers to the chronology of events in an interior world. A person may dream or fantasize at great length during only a few seconds of ordinary time. One may even seem to spend many years in that world within; one may take a job, marry, have children, and see them grow to maturity. In Turkish this is called Zaman Zaman İçinde. It is elsewhere sometimes referred to as "Frozen Time" or "Moments of Eternity."

³The sieve is never in the straw. While threshing grain, workers pass the detached kernels and finely ground straw through a large-mesh sieve. Longer pieces of straw which may still have grain attached to them do not pass through and will need further threshing. So, the straw is in the sieve, not the sieve in the straw.

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common people, but he always did so in disguise

One day that prince decided to go fishing, and so he dressed in the clothes of a fisherman and went down to the seashore. He fished for awhile without any success, and then he decided to stroll through a nearby fishing village. As he was passing the cottage of a fisherman, he saw in its garden a beautiful young woman. She was the daughter of an old and impoverished fisherman. Her name was Alavere.⁴

The prince spoke to Alavere, who thought that he was really a fisherman. Every day after that he fished near the same village, and every day Alavere went to the shore to talk with him. He always greeted her by saying, "Hey, Alavere, I wish that Allah would give you to me as my bride." Then he would laugh and say, "But I really could not marry you." She did not know that the young fisherman was really a prince. She simply liked him, and he liked

Several years after they had first met, the prince was summoned to the throne room by his parents. They told

⁴Later in the tale the narrator calls her Alvera. Neither name is Turkish.

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him that he was now old enough to be married. The ruler said, "Find a beautiful and suitable girl in our as your bride, and we shall arrange a wedding celebration." As soon as the prince had selected a girl who was acceptable to his parents, plans were made for a wedding festival that would last for forty days and forty nights.

As the time for the wedding drew near, the prince decided to make one last visit to see Alavere. He went to her village, where he stood before her cottage and called her. She replied to his call by repeating his earlier greeting to her. She replied, "May Allah match you with me in marriage."

The prince laughed and said, "Oh, Alavere, I have never revealed to you my real identity. I am a prince of this land, and there is no way in which I could marry you. I am soon to be married to the daughter of a distinguished family in our city. I came here today to invite you to my wedding." Taking out a purse of gold, the prince handed it to Alavere, saying, "Use this money to buy beautiful clothes, fine shoes, and jewelry to wear at my wedding party."

Alavere was greatly distressed by this news.

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had had high hopes of marrying the young fisherman some day, but now those hopes were destroyed. Although she was unhappy about doing so, she went to the city and bought clothes, shoes, and expensive jewelry. Then on the appointed day, she proceeded to the palace for the wedding party. She was very beautiful, but her beauty now did not resemble the beauty of a girl in a fishing village. She now looked similar to the daughters of the wealthy guests at the palace.

The girl whom the prince was to marry was not happy about her situation. Her marriage had been arranged by her parents, even though she and the prince had never even spoken to each other. She did not want to marry the prince, and so she decided to pay some young girl a large sum of money to take her place during the marriage ceremony. As soon as she saw Alavere, the designated bride said to herself, "There is the girl I must persuade to switch places with me!" Alavere happily agreed to this proposal but she refused to accept the large bag of gold which the designated bride offered to her.

The prince looked over the crowd of guests, and he was disappointed not to see Alvera [sic] among them. But he had to think of other things as the wedding ceremony was

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drawing to a close. After the actual marriage ritual had ended, the bride and groom were conducted to the nuptial chamber. There the groom lifted the veil from the face of the bride. And what did he see? To his astonishment, he saw the face of Alavere. He first gasped, "Oh, oh, Alavere!" Then he said, "It must be that Allah really did intend to have us married, and that was why he brought us together in the first place." The prince laughed heartily and ordered that further feasting and entertainment be provided for the guests. The prince and Alavere exchanged vows which began their long and happy life together.

May all of us also enjoy satisfying lives!⁵

⁵This is an ineptly told story with gaps in both the logic and the narrative structure. It is more like the outline of a tale than an actual tale. It is also almost devoid of Turkish elements.